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## **CRICKET DAMAGE AND POISONOUS PLANT RESEARCH AMONG UTAH PROJECTS APPROVED BY KEY SENATE COMMITTEE**

**WASHINGTON, D.C.**— Utah's annual problem with cricket and grasshopper infestation will now be addressed at the federal level because of language included by Senator Bob Bennett (R-Utah) in an emergency spending measure approved today by the Senate Appropriations Committee. The committee today also approved over \$5 million for critical agriculture research for fiscal year 2001 necessary to prevent economic losses in Utah's livestock industry.

"Utah is now in a state of agricultural emergency due to cricket and grasshopper infestation," said Bennett, a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee. "We experienced over \$20 million in damages last year and the infestation is expected to be twice as damaging this year. It is essential that we address this problem now in order to avoid damaging effects on Utah's economy later. I am pleased that my colleagues recognize the importance and urgency of this funding."

Over 1.2 million acres were infested by the time the extent of the insect problem was realized last year. Because of the late discovery, the crickets and grasshoppers laid an enormous amount of eggs. The problem was compounded by a mild winter, which did not kill the eggs and an early spring this year allowing the insects to hatch prematurely. As a result, the insect population is larger this year and the affected area is significantly greater. On March 15, 2000 Governor Leavitt declared a state of agricultural emergency.

The committee today also approved provisions for agricultural research in Utah in the Agriculture Appropriations Bill for fiscal year 2001. Five million of the funds will be spent on the construction of the Agriculture Research Service Poisonous Plant Laboratory in Logan.

"The research conducted at the Poisonous Plant Research Laboratory is essential in the prevention of extreme economic losses," said Bennett. "Much of rural America is dependent on the livestock industry, or the distribution of livestock products for their well-being. I am pleased that these provisions were approved, allowing the Laboratory to expand their research capabilities."

It has been estimated that death losses and reproductive problems caused by

poisonous plants cost livestock producers in the 17 western states \$345, 000,000 annually. The Poisonous Plant Research Laboratory in Logan is the only nationally and internationally recognized laboratory focused on the investigation of plants poisonous to livestock. These funds will allow for expansion of poisonous plant testing and construction of a new researching lab.

Other Utah agriculture projects approved by the Appropriations Committee today:

- \$4.5 million in emergency funds secured by Bennett for financial and technical assistance to Long Park Dam in Daggett County for repairs.
- \$250,000 for pasture and forage research at Utah State University.
- \$500,000 above the fiscal year 2000 level for the Bee Biology lab at Utah State University.

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<http://www.senate.gov/~bennett>